

RUGBY FOOTBALL

Munster's Fine Fight In The Inter-Provincial

A FORWARD STRUGGLE

The first of the Inter-provincials was decided at Lansdowne road yesterday, when Ulster met Munster in fine but very cold weather, on a rather slippery sod. The attendance was on the small side, and a strong north breeze had its effect in spoiling the game, as did the greasy ball, the handling of both sets of backs being defective throughout.

Both teams turned out as selected, with the exception of one change each. H. W. Stephenson, of United Services, who played such a sterling game against Wales at Swansea last season, was unable to partner his brother on the right wing owing to an attack of influenza, and the Trinity winger, Steele, replaced him. Munster substituted G. J. G. O'Malley (London Irish) for Barry, of Cork Constitution, as scrum half.

A FORWARD STRUGGLE.

The play was of the typical forward rushing order, and the backs got little of the ball. When they did get it they made poor use of it, as many promising movements broke down through wild passing or faulty handling, and the Munster forwards, electing to play the typical Irish rushing game, did not heel to give their back division a chance. In the open they cut their way time after time through all opposition, but the old Munster fault of buck kicking when near the opponents' line was manifest and at least one score was lost through this cause. On the run of the play Munster had quite as much of it as the Ulstermen, and though Steele scored an unconverted try early in the match, and McClenaghan got over for a score that was not improved on, towards the end of the first half a great Munster forward rush ended in Brown (Constitution) scoring the kick failing, and the sides changed ends with Ulster leading by three points.

In the second half, although playing into the teeth of the breeze, Munster put more ginger into their play, and a peculiar happening, similar to that recorded in the Clontarf v. Palmerston match last Saturday, resulted in the referee awarding a penalty, which O'Connell converted, and put the sides on level terms, Ulster immediately retaliated with a try by McClenaghan, which M'Farland converted, and the ex-International full back next put the issue beyond doubt by landing a penalty goal, giving Ulster the victory by 8 points.

THE PLAYERS.

For Ulster, Crawford, at back, got little to do, but did well whatever came his way, though his kicking was shorter than of yore. G. V. Stephenson was very prominent in the first half as an individualist, but fell off somewhat in the second period. Steele put in some smart runs, but the Munster tackling cut his gallop short on many occasions. Jackson got hurt and did not shine, and McClenaghan, too, was not much in the picture; except in fits and starts, and though he did several brilliant things at out half, Wheeler dropped many passes, and Gardiner was but moderate as a scrum worker, though he got more of the ball than his vis-a-vis O'Malley. Of a good pack, Rev. S. McVicker, H. McVicker, J. K. S. Thompson, and W. T. Browne were best and showed up well in the loose. M'Farland was resourceful, and McClelland worked hard in the light.

For Munster, O'Connell, the old Cork County wing, did excellently at back. He is small but very speedy, and displayed any amount of pluck, kicking and tackling in capital style. The Munster quartette did not combine to any great extent, but Favier and J. Murphy-O'Connor were very sound in defence. Dr. Donal Sullivan was moderate and obviously lacked practice, and Wellwood was good at times. Hamilton was poor at out half, but the London Irishman O'Malley showed that he had plenty of pluck at the base of the scrum, and made the most of his chances. Of the forwards, Popham was obviously off colour, having played six matches in ten days, and sustained a twisted knee during the London-Irish tour in Wales. Bradley was in fine form and easily the best forward on the field. He was always in the van in the loose, and next in merit were T. Sullivan and O'Mahony, two fine, keen forwards who will be heard of again. Leahy and Browne also were prominent at times.

THE FIRST HALF.

Munster won the toss and played from the city end, aided by a strong breeze. Stephenson started for Ulster, and Wheeler replied to touch at the centre. After some midfield-play, Wheeler getting possession from a scrum at half way sent Stephenson away, and the latter gave to Steele, who scored a fine try at the right, Stephenson failing to convert.

A free to Ulster, taken by Stephenson, made no progress, and Murphy-O'Connor put Munster invading. Bradley and Leahy led a Munster dribble, but the ball went into touch in goal. Sullivan, with a neat kick, kept Munster invading. Crawford stopped a Munster rush led by Bradley and O'Mahony, but the Southern forwards were now working hard, and Stephenson just saved near the line. The Ulster backs started a movement, and the ball travelled per Thompson, Browne, and M'Farland to McClenaghan, who scored at the left, M'Farland's kick failing. Jackson got hurt, and retired, M'Farland taking his place at left centre.

Jackson resumed, and Mahony led a Munster dribble to inside the Ulster 25. O'Malley and Murphy-O'Connor put Munster invading, Crawford stopping and finding touch near half-way. Murphy-O'Connor missed a chance through a knock-on. Mahony gained ground with a smart kick. Jackson, Brown, and McClenaghan transferred play to the Munster 25. The Southern forwards, headed by Mahony, Popham and Daly, rushed back, and Crawford's kick was well replied to by Favier, who found touch at the Ulster 25. The play so far was mainly confined to the forwards, the wind and the greasy ball rendering the play of the backs faulty. Bradley led a great dribble to the Ulster line, and B. Brown (Constitution) scored at the left. Daly's kick just went wide.

THE SECOND HALF.

The interval arrived with Ulster leading by two tries to one. On restarting an exchange between M'Farland and Donal Sullivan left play at the centre. Thompson headed an Ulster forward rush, but O'Connell saved and cleared smartly, Munster invading in the loose. Thompson brought play back to the Munster 25, but Bradley, Browne and Popham dribbled back, a free spilling, and Wheeler found touch near Munster 25. Steele kept Ulster attacking, but Wheeler dropped a couple of passes, and Munster rushed to the centre, headed by Bradley and O'Malley; and Wellwood found touch at Ulster 25. Munster forwards put in a great rush to the North-corners 25, where Ulster were penalised. Daly's kick fell short, and M'Farland, heeling, found touch at his 25. A free to Ulster took them to half-way, but a free to Munster enabled Favier to put his side again on the attack. Wild passing by the Munster backs lost ground, and McClenaghan ran strongly and in-passed to S. McVicker, who looked like scoring, but Bradley brought him down in the nick of time. Ulster pressed, but Murphy-O'Connor cleared. Brown, Leahy and Favier brought play to the Ulster 25, but Thompson dribbled back, Murphy-O'Connor stopping a rush, and Wellwood clearing to touch. Hamilton went to wing three-quarter, and Wellwood took his place at out half. O'Malley stopped an Ulster rush near his line, and Leahy led a Munster rush to near half-way. An exchange between Crawford, Favier and Steele left play at Munster 25, where Jackson, McClenaghan and Crawford had a passing bout, but O'Connell tackled well. A free to Ulster, taken by M'Farland near the 25 flag, went wide. Jackson ran well on the left, but his pass to Wheeler went amiss, and Bradley and Popham dribbled back to the centre, where Popham got hurt, but resumed. Ulster backs got going, but Favier brought Steele down. Wellwood broke away with a grand run, but his pass went astray. However, the Munster forwards attacked, and Crawford, to save, kicked the ball over his line and over the bank. The referee awarded a free, and O'Connell landed a fine goal to equalise, amidst great applause. On Saturday last a similar incident occurred in the Palmerston-Clontarf match, but the referee awarded a penalty try, which was converted. On restarting Ulster invaded, and Wheeler, Jackson and McClenaghan handling, the last-named ran in to ground behind the posts, M'Farland converting and putting Ulster five points up. Munster being penalised, M'Farland landed a three-point goal, and Ulster left off winners by 8 points.

Result:—

ULSTER—1 goal, 1 penalty goal, 2 tries (14 points).

MUNSTER—1 penalty goal, 1 try (6 points).

Teams

ULSTER.

Back—W. E. Crawford (Lansdowne and Malone).
Three-quarter backs—J. Steele (Dublin University and Dungannon), G. V. Stephenson (Queen's University, Belfast), F. Jackson (N.I. of Ireland), R. McClenaghan (Instonians).

Half-backs—J. E. Wheeler (Queen's University, Belfast), J. B. Gardiner (North of Ireland).
Forwards—A. D. Brennan (Lansdowne and Instonians), W. F. Browne (Sandhurst and North of Ireland), D. Cunningham (North of Ireland), T. E. McClelland (Queen's University, Belfast), B. A. T. M'Farland (North of Ireland and Derry), Rev. S. McVicker (North of Ireland), H. McVicker (Edinburgh University and Ballymoney), J. K. S. Thompson (Dublin University and Dungannon).

MUNSTER.

Back—D. O'Connell (Cork Constitution).
Three-quarter backs—J. Favier (Cork Constitution), Dr. D. B. Sullivan (London Irish and Dolphin), J. Murphy-O'Connor (University College, Cork), J. W. Wellwood (Dolphin).
Half-backs—D. W. Hamilton (University College, Cork) O. J. S. O'Malley (London Irish).

Forwards—M. J. Bradley (Dolphin), J. O'Mahony (Dolphin), T. O'Sullivan (Dolphin), I. Popham (Cork Constitution), D. Browne (Cork Constitution), D. Daly (Cork Constitution), J. Cunningham (Cork Constitution), M. Leahy (University College, Cork).
Referee—Dr. de Courcy Wheeler.

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Holles Street
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